

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA ATLANTA DIVISION

UNITED STATES ex rel.	)
DEBRA CONAWAY,	)
ALOMA BRYAN, and	)
DELORES HENDERSON,	)
STATE OF GEORGIA ex rel.  DEBORAH CONAWAY,  ALOMA BRYAN, and  DELORES HENDERSON,	1:15-CV-3094 CASE NO FILED UNDER SEAL
Plaintiffs,	Jury Trial Requested
v.	) )
UNIVERSAL HEALTH SERVICES, INC., and SOUTHERN CRESCENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEM,	) ) )
Defendants.	)

## **COMPLAINT**

1. This is a *qui tam* action by Plaintiffs-Relators Debra Conaway, Aloma Bryan, and Delores Henderson ("Relators"), on behalf of the United States and the State of Georgia, to recover damages and civil penalties arising from Defendants' violations of the Federal False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. § 3729 *et seq.*, and the Georgia State False Medicaid Claims Act, O.C.G.A. § 49-4-168 *et seq.* As shown below,

Defendants, who operate psychiatric facilities, defrauded the United States and Georgia through schemes that were also harmful to patients in Defendants' care.

#### Jurisdiction and Venue

- 2. This action arises under the False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. § 3729 et seq., and the Georgia State False Medicaid Claims Act, O.C.G.A. § 49-4-168 et seq.
- 3. Jurisdiction over this action is vested in this Court by 31 U.S.C. § 3732(a) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331, in that Count One of this action arises under the laws of the United States. Supplemental jurisdiction over Count Two arises under 31 U.S.C. § 3732(b), since that count arises from the same transactions or occurrences as Count One, and under 28 U.S.C. § 1367, since that count is so related to the federal claims that they form part of the same case or controversy.
- 4. Venue is proper in this district under 31 U.S.C. § 3732(a). At least one of the Defendants can be found, resides, and transacts business within the district, and many of the acts forming the basis of this action occurred within the district.

# The Parties and Related Entities

5. Universal Health Services, Inc. ("UHS") is a Delaware corporation with its corporate headquarters in Pennsylvania. UHS operates more than 226 facilities, most of which are behavioral health facilities and acute care hospitals, with a small number of ambulatory surgery centers throughout the United States, including in this

district. A large percentage of UHS's revenues comes from Medicare, Medicaid, and other federal health care programs.

- 6. Southern Crescent Behavioral Health System ("SCBHS") is, upon information and belief, a subsidiary of UHS. SCBHS operates two psychiatric facilities near Atlanta, Georgia: (i) Anchor Hospital ("Anchor"), a 132-bed adult psychiatric hospital, and (ii) Crescent Pines, a 50-bed juvenile and adult psychiatric hospital. Anchor is divided into two separate units. The first unit is for patients who only have a psychiatric diagnosis. The second unit is for "dual diagnosis" patients i.e., a psychiatric diagnosis as well as substance abuse issues. Upon information and belief, UHS owns several other behavioral health facilities in this State.
- 7. Relator Debra Conaway was employed as an Assistant Director of Nursing at Anchor from October 2013 through September 2014. In that capacity, she was a key member of the nursing management team. She was also involved in drafting and implementing policies and procedures, participating in treatment planning, orientation of staff, and advised on JCAH compliance. Relator Conaway's immediate supervisor was Kim Butts, Nurse Executive for Anchor.
- 8. Relator Aloma Bryan was employed most recently as a Nursing Supervisor at Anchor. She was employed with Anchor from May 2006 through September 2014.
  In that capacity, she was responsible for total oversight of patient services and

nursing supervision, often working directly with patients. Relator Bryan's immediate supervisor was Kim Butts, Nurse Executive for Anchor.

9. Relator Delores Henderson was employed as a mental health assistant at Anchor from February 2009 through August 2014. In that capacity, she monitored patient safety. She worked directly with patients. Relator Henderson's immediate supervisor was Kim Butts, Nurse Executive for Anchor.

# Reimbursement for Inpatient Psychiatric Services

- 10. Medicare payment for most inpatient hospital services is based on a prospective payment system, under which a hospital is paid a predetermined amount based upon the patient's Diagnostic Resource Group ("DRG"). Under this DRG system, the hospital receives a fixed payment regardless of the length of the patient's stay. Thus, the hospital does not have an incentive to prolong the patient's stay in the hospital.
- 11. Inpatient psychiatric services provided in a psychiatric hospital, however, are not covered by the DRG system, but are covered by a separate Inpatient Psychiatric Facility Prospective Payment System ("IPF PPS"). Under this system, psychiatric facilities are paid a per diem amount for each patient, with adjustments to account for certain facility and patient characteristics.

- 12. Because psychiatric hospitals are paid a per diem amount, they have an incentive to prolong a patient's stay. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services ("CMS") noted that it was concerned about this incentive when it implemented the IPF PPS system. *See* 69 Fed. Reg. 66922, 66952 ("since the IPF PPS is a per diem payment methodology, we are concerned about inadvertently creating an incentive to unnecessarily delay discharge in order to receive additional payment").
- 13. Although CMS expressed its concern about creating an incentive to delay discharge, it noted that existing regulations require that, as a condition of participation in the Medicare program, "the hospital must have a discharge planning process that applies to all patients. The hospital's policies and procedures must be specified in writing." 42 C.F.R. § 482.43. Among other things, "[t]he hospital personnel must complete the evaluation on a timely basis ... to avoid unnecessary delays in discharge." 42 C.F.R. § 482.43(b)(5), discussed in 69 Fed. Reg. 66922, 66952. Meeting the conditions of participation is characterized as a condition of payment under 42 C.F.R. § 412.404 ("an inpatient psychiatric facility must meet the conditions of this section to receive payment under the prospective payment system described in this subpart for inpatient hospital services ...").

# Anchor Routinely Manipulated Discharge Dates to Maximize Revenue

- 14. During their time at Anchor, Relators observed that Anchor administrators would regularly pressure employees to keep patients longer than was medically necessary in order to increase revenues. Even when members of the medical team determined that discharge was appropriate, the administrators would routinely seek to override their professional judgment, and persuade or pressure them into changing the patient's proposed discharge date.
- 15. At Anchor, the treatment team held regular meetings to discuss how patients were progressing, as well as their proposed discharge date. During these meetings, the team would determine which patients were ready to be discharged.
- 16. Routinely, CEO Margaret Collier would pressure members of the team to change patients' scheduled discharge dates. The reasons for such delay would have nothing to do with the patient's condition, but would be based solely on the hospital's desire to bill for additional days of care.
- 17. Routinely, Kim Butts would pressure Relators to change the acuity level of patients, or convince the psychiatrists to change acuity levels, in order to increase the number of patients within the facility. For example, on or about February 11, 2014, Ms. Butts sent text messages to Relator Debra Conaway directing her to artificially heighten acuity levels for certain patients.

- 18. Anchor's intentional efforts to delay patient discharge led to overcrowding. Often due to overcrowding, patients were not given rooms or even beds but were placed in day areas or waiting rooms on the floor or couch. Although Relators worked at Anchor, they believe the same practices were likely followed at the other facilities, including Crescent Pines, which was part of the same health system and had the same CEO.
- 19. In addition to violating Medicare's conditions of payment and participation and causing false claims for medically unnecessary services, keeping a patient in a psychiatric facility after he should be discharged increases the risk of harm to the patient, especially in an overcrowded facility.

# Anchor Recruited Patients to Undergo Unnecessary Procedures

- 20. Another practice used at Anchor to illegally increase revenues was to recruit patients to undergo medically unnecessary psychiatric procedures.
- 21. For example, patients who had little or no family support were routinely targeted and recruited to undergo electroconvulsive therapy ("ECT") even though the patient was not otherwise a proper candidate for ECT and/or ECT was not medically necessary. This dangerous practice was particularly lucrative for Defendants because the reimbursement rate for ECT is much greater than the actual cost of performing ECT.

## Anchor Admitted Patients Who Were Medically Unstable

- 22. Another scheme used at Anchor to illegally increase revenues was to admit patients who were medically unstable for treatment at a psychiatric facility and who should have been treated at a hospital or other acute medical care facility. Administrators at Anchor would intentionally represent that a potential patient had a lower acuity level in order to admit them as a patient at Anchor, when the patient should instead have been sent to a hospital or acute medical care facility.
- 23. Relators were routinely instructed to contact an Anchor-employed psychiatrist and request that the psychiatrist admit a patient who needed medical care from a hospital. If one psychiatrist refused the patient, then the Relators were pressured to contact additional Anchor-employed psychiatrists until the patient was eventually admitted at Anchor, despite the patient being in a physical condition that required medical care from a hospital and not psychiatric or mental health care from Anchor.
- 24. As a result of the actions described above, UHS and SCHBS would routinely submit claims to Medicare, Medicaid, and other federal healthcare programs that were false because (i) the services were medically unnecessary, and indeed harmful, (ii) UHS and SCHBS violated applicable conditions of payment and participation, or (iii) they were otherwise improper.

#### COUNT ONE

#### FEDERAL FALSE CLAIMS ACT

- 25. The allegations in the preceding paragraphs are incorporated by reference.
- 26. Defendants violated the Federal False Claims Act, 31 U.S.C. § 3729 et seq., in that they:
  - a. knowingly presented or caused to be presented numerous false claims
     for payment or approval;
  - knowingly made, used, or caused to be made or used, false records or statements material to false or fraudulent claims, and to get false or fraudulent claims paid or approved;
  - c. knowingly made, used, or caused to be made or used, false records or statements material to an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the Government, or to conceal, avoid, or decrease an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the Government;
  - d. knowingly concealed or knowingly and improperly avoided or decreased an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the Government; and
  - e. conspired to commit the above acts, and to defraud the government by getting false or fraudulent claims allowed or paid.

27. As a result of Defendants' violations of the Federal False Claims Act, the United States has suffered damages in an amount to be determined at trial.

#### **COUNT TWO**

## GEORGIA STATE FALSE MEDICAID CLAIMS ACT

- 28. The allegations in the preceding paragraphs are incorporated by reference.
- 29. Defendants violated the Georgia State False Medicaid Claims Act, O.C.G.A. § 49-4-168 *et seq.*, in that they:
  - a. knowingly presented or caused to be presented numerous false claims
     for payment or approval to the Georgia Medicaid program;
  - knowingly made, used, or caused to be made or used, false records or statements to get false or fraudulent claims paid or approved by the Georgia Medicaid program;
  - c. conspired to defraud the Georgia Medicaid program by getting false or fraudulent claims allowed or paid; and
  - d. knowingly made, used, or caused to be made or used false records or statements to conceal, avoid, or decrease an obligation to pay, repay, or transmit money or property to the State of Georgia.

30. As a result of Defendants' violations of the Georgia State False Medicaid Claims Act, the State of Georgia has suffered damages in an amount to be determined at trial.

WHEREFORE, Relators, on behalf of themselves, the United States, and the State of Georgia, pray:

- (a) That the Court enter judgment against Defendants in an amount equal to three times the amount of damages the United States and the State of Georgia have sustained because of Defendants' actions, plus a civil penalty of between \$5,500 and \$11,000 for each violation of the Federal False Claims Act and, separately, an additional civil penalty of between \$5,500 and \$11,000 for each violation of the Georgia State False Medicaid Claims Act;
- (b) That Relators be awarded an amount that the Court decides is reasonable for collecting the civil penalty and damages, which shall be at least 15 percent but not more than 25 percent of the proceeds of the action or settlement of the claim if the government intervenes, and not less than 25 percent nor more than 30 percent of the proceeds of the action or settlement of the claim if the government does not intervene;
- (c) That Relators be awarded all costs and expenses incurred, including reasonable attorneys' fees; and

(d) That the Court order such other relief as is appropriate.

Trial by jury is hereby requested.

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JS44 (Rev. 1/13 NDGA)

CIVIL COVER SHEET The JS44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket record. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ATTACHED)

I. (a) PLAINTIFF(S)  United States ex rel.  Debra Conaway,  Aloma Bryan, and  Delores Henderson  (b) county of residence of first Listed  PLAINTIFF Fayette  (except in u.s. PLAINTIFF CASES)	DEFENDANT(S)  Universal Health Services, Inc. and Southern Crescent Benavioral  Health System  COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF FIRST LISTED DEFENDANT Fulton  (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)  NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED			
(c) ATTORNEYS (FIRM NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER  Jordan Jewkes  E-MAIL ADDRESS)  David M. Stewart  Crowder Stewart  400 Westpark Ct, 9te 220  Peachtree City, GA 30269  770-631-1811  Liewkes @webb-firm.com  Jiewkes @webb-firm.com  Jiewkes @webb-firm.com  Javid Crowderstew	tup 73			
(PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)	III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES  (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX FOR PLAINTIFF AND ONE BOX FOR DEFENDANT)  (FOR DIVERSITY CASES ONLY)  PLF DEF  1			
IV. ORIGIN (PLACE AN "X "IN ONE BOX ONLY)    V. ORIGIN   PLACE AN "X "IN ONE BOX ONLY)    ORIGINAL   PROCEEDING   REMOVED FROM   REINSTATED OR   S ANOTHER DISTRICT   MULTIDISTRICT   FROM MAGISTRATE JUDGE				
(IF COMPLEX, CHECK REASON BELOW)  1. Unusually large number of parties.  2. Unusually large number of claims or defenses.  3. Factual issues are exceptionally complex  4. Greater than normal volume of evidence.  5. Extended discovery period is needed.	6. Problems locating or preserving evidence 7. Pending parallel investigations or actions by government. 8. Multiple use of experts. 9. Need for discovery outside United States boundaries. 10. Existence of highly technical issues and proof.			
CONTINUED ON REVERSE				
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY  RECEIPT * AMOUNT \$  JUDGE MAG. JUDGE (Referral)	APPLYING IFP MAG. JUDGE (IFP)  NATURE OF SUIT CAUSE OF ACTION			
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# VI. NATURE OF SUIT (PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX ONLY)

CONTRACT - "0" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	CIVIL RIGHTS - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	SOCIAL SECURITY - "0" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK
ENFORCEMENT OF JUDGMENT  152 RECOVERY OF DEFAULTED STUDENT	442 EMPLOYMENT	861 HIA (1395ff)
LOANS (Excl. Veterans)	443 HOUSING/ ACCOMMODATIONS 444 WELFARE	862 BLACK LUNG (923) 863 DIWC (405(g))
☐ 153 RECOVERY OF OVERPAYMENT OF VETERAN'S BENEFITS	440 OTHER CIVIL RIGHTS 445 AMERICANS with DISABILITIES - Employment	863 DIWW (405(g)) 864 SSID TITLE XVI
VETERANS BENEFITS	446 AMERICANS with DISABILITIES - Employment  446 AMERICANS with DISABILITIES - Other	☐ 864 SSID TITLE XVI
CONTRACT - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	448 EDUCATION	
110 INSURANCE 120 MARINE 130 MILLER ACT	IMMIGRATION - "0" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	FEDERAL TAX SUITS - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK
130 MILLER ACT	462 NATURALIZATION APPLICATION	870 TAXES (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant)
☐ 140 NEGOTIABLE INSTRUMENT ☐ 151 MEDICARE ACT	☐ 465 OTHER IMMIGRATION ACTIONS	871 IRS - THIRD PARTY 26 USC 7609
☐160 STOCKHOLDERS' SUITS	PRISONER PETITIONS - "0" MONTHS DISCOVERY	OTHER STATUTES - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY
☐ 190 OTHER CONTRACT ☐ 195 CONTRACT PRODUCT LIABILITY	TRACK	TRACK
□196 FRANCHISE	☐ 463 HABEAS CORPUS- Alien Detainee ☐ 510 MOTIONS TO VACATE SENTENCE	375 FALSE CLAIMS ACT 400 STATE REAPPORTIONMENT
REAL PROPERTY - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY	530 HABEAS CORPUS 535 HABEAS CORPUS DEATH PENALTY	☐ 430 BANKS AND BANKING ☐ 450 COMMERCE/ICC RATES/ETC.
TRACK	☐ 540 MANDAMUS & OTHER	460 DEPORTATION
210 LAND CONDEMNATION 220 FORECLOSURE	☐ 550 CIVIL. RIGHTS - Filed Pro se☐ 555 PRISON CONDITION(S) - Filed Pro se	☐ 470 RACKETEER INFLUENCED AND CORRUPT ORGANIZATIONS
☐230 RENT LEASE & EJECTMENT	☐ 560 CIVIL DETAINEE: CONDITIONS OF	480 CONSUMER CREDIT 490 CABLE/SATELLITE TV
☐240 TORTS TO LAND ☐245 TORT PRODUCT LIABILITY	CONFINEMENT	■891 AGRICULTURAL ACTS
290 ALL OTHER REAL PROPERTY	PRISONER PETITIONS - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY	893 ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS 895 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT
TORTE DEPONIAL BUILDY HAR MONTHS	TRACK	■950 CONSTITUTIONALITY OF STATE STATUTES
TORTS - PERSONAL INJURY - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	550 CIVIL RIGHTS - Filed by Counsel 555 PRISON CONDITION(S) - Filed by Counsel	■890 OTHER STATUTORY ACTIONS ■899 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES ACT /
☐310 AIRPLANE		REVIEW OR APPEAL OF AGENCY DECISION
315 AIRPLANE PRODUCT LIABILITY 320 ASSAULT, LIBEL & SLANDER	FORFEITURE/PENALTY - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	OTHER STATUTES - "8" MONTHS DISCOVERY
☐ 320 ASSAULT, LIBEL & SLANDER ☐ 330 FEDERAL EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY ☐ 340 MARINE	625 DRUG RELATED SEIZURE OF PROPERTY	TRACK
345 MARINE PRODUCT LIABILITY	21 USC 881 690 OTHER	410 ANTITRUST 850 SECURITIES / COMMODITIES / EXCHANGE
350 MOTOR VEHICLE 355 MOTOR VEHICLE PRODUCT LIABILITY		
☐ 360 OTHER PERSONAL INJURY	LABOR - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	OTHER STATUTES - "0" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK
☐ 362 PERSONAL INJURY - MEDICAL MALPRACTICE	720 LABOR/MGMT. RELATIONS	■896 ARBITRATION
365 PERSONAL INJURY - PRODUCT LIABILITY 367 PERSONAL INJURY - HEALTH CARE/	740 RAILWAY LABOR ACT 751 FAMILY and MEDICAL LEAVE ACT	(Confirm / Vacate / Order / Modify)
PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCT LIABILITY	790 OTHER LABOR LITIGATION 791 EMPL. RET. INC. SECURITY ACT	
☐ 368 ASBESTOS PERSONAL INJURY PRODUCT LIABILITY	191 EMPL. RET. INC. SECURITY ACT	
LIABILIT :	PROPERTY RIGHTS - "4" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	
TORTS - PERSONAL PROPERTY - "4" MONTHS	820 COPYRIGHTS 840 TRADEMARK	* PLEASE NOTE DISCOVERY
DISCOVERY TRACK 370 OTHER FRAUD		TRACK FOR EACH CASE TYPE.
371 TRUTH IN LENDING	PROPERTY RIGHTS - "8" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK	SEE LOCAL RULE 26.3
380 OTHER PERSONAL PROPERTY DAMAGE 385 PROPERTY DAMAGE PRODUCT LIABILITY		
BANKRUPTCY - "0" MONTHS DISCOVERY TRACK		
422 APPEAL 28 USC 158		
423 WITHDRAWAL 28 USC 157		
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VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLA	INT:	
CHECK IF CLASS ACTION UNDER F.F.		
JURY DEMAND YES NO (CHECK YES		
JURY DEMAND YES NO (CHECK YES)	ONLY IF DEMANDED IN COMPLAINT)	
VIII. RELATED/REFILED CAS	SE(S) IF ANY	
JUDGE	DOCKET NO	<u></u>
CIVIL CASES ARE DEEMED RELATED IF TH	HE PENDING CASE INVOLVES: (CHECK APPROPRIATE)	BOX)
1. PROPERTY INCLUDED IN AN EARLIER		
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7. EITHER SAME OR ALL OF THE PARTIE	S AND ISSUES IN THIS CASE WERE PREVIOUSLY INVOL	VED IN CASE NO. , WHICH WAS
DISMISSED. This case IS IS NO	OT (check one box) SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME CASE.	
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